

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 0997

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB PFOR ICFTU XM XG DA

SUBJ: ICFTU MISSION TO LATIN AMERICA -
IMPRESSIONS OF A PARTICIPANT

REF: SAN JOSE 1338 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY: A DANISH MEMBER OF THE RECENT ICFTU MISSION
TO LATIN AMERICA ASCRIBED HIS PARTICIPATION TO A PAINFUL
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CONFRONTATION AMONG NORDIC LABOR UNION LEADERS. HE SAID ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TRIP WERE BUNGLED AND THE DELEGATION APPARENTLY DIVIDED ON ITS PURPOSE. ORIT APPEARS TO BE A DEAD LETTER, WITH LA DISCUSSION FOCUSING ON WHETHER ITS SUCCESSOR SHOULD BE A WHOLLY-INDEPENDENT LA BODY OR AFFILIATED WITH THE ICFTU. END SUMMARY.

1. KJELD AAKJAER OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT, DANISH TRADE UNION FEDERATION (LO), HAS GIVEN LABATT A RUNDOWN ON THE RECENT ICFTU MISSION TO LATIN AMERICA. AAKJAER SAID THAT HIS PLACE ON THE MISSION AROSE OUT OF WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS A PAINFUL CONFRONTATION AMONG THE NORDIC LABOR UNION FEDERATIONS. WHEN THOMAS NIELSEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE DANISH LO, WAS UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MISSION AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED, HE RECOMMENDED THAT EITHER TOR ASPENGREN OR GUNNAR NILSSON, HIS COUNTERPARTS IN THE NORWEGIAN AND SWEDISH FEDERATIONS, TAKE HIS PLACE. ACCORDING TO AAKJAER, NIELSEN'S RECOMMENDATION WAS MADE WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IF NEITHER ASPENGREN NOR NILSSON COULD GO, THE INITIATIVE WOULD THEN RETURN TO THE DANISH PRESIDENT TO APPOINT A LOWER-LEVEL PARTICIPANT. ASPENGREN AND NILSSON, HOWEVER, DECIDED ON THEIR OWN THAT SWEDISH FEDERATION VICE PRESIDENT RUNE MOLIN SHOULD BE NAMED. NIELSEN REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE MOLIN'S BONA FIDES AND PUT HIS OWN MAN, AAKJAER, ON THE DELEGATION.

2. AAKJAER SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TRIP WERE "BUNGLED", AND IMPLIED THAT MIGUEL MARTINEZ OF THE ICFTU STAFF WAS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LACK OF COORDINATION IN THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES VISITED. MOREOVER, AAKJAER SAID THAT THE DELEGATION ITSELF APPEARED TO BE DIVIDED ON THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE TRIP. ICFTU SEC GEN OTTO KERSTEN SEEMED DETERMINED TO MAKE COURTESY CALLS ON THE PRESIDENT OF EACH COUNTRY VISITED, WHILE OTHER DELEGATION MEMBERS WERE MORE ANXIOUS TO ENGAGE IN TALKS WITH THE LEADERS OF THE LOCAL ORIT-AFFILIATED LABOR CENTERS.

3. ON THE SUBSTANTIVE SIDE, AAKJAER SAID THAT IN HIS OPINION A NEW ORGANIZATION WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE FORMED
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TO REPLACE ORIT. THE ICFTU MISSION, ESPECIALLY KERSTEN AND DONAL MACDONALD OF THE CANADIAN CLC, WERE IMPRESSED WITH THE DEGREE OF RESENTMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AGAINST THE AFL-CIO AND AIFLD.

4. AS A RESULT OF CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS, MAJOR LATIN AMERICAN ORIT AFFILIATES WERE NOW NEAR AGREEMENT ON A

NEW REGIONAL ORGANIZATION. THE APRIL 25 - MAY 1 CTV CONGRESS IN CARACAS WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN REACHING FINAL AGREEMENT. (IT WAS EXPECTED THAT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY JOSE VARGAS WOULD BE ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE CTV.)

5. THE NEW ORGANIZATION WOULD BE EITHER A WHOLLY-INDEPENDENT LATIN AMERICAN BODY OR AN ICFTU-AFFILIATED REGIONAL BODY SIMILAR TO THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC). AAKJAER SAID THAT HE AND KOK OF THE NETHERLANDS HAD STRONGLY URGED SECGEN KERSTEN TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE ICFTU WAS INVOLVED IN THE FORMATION OF THE NEW BODY IN ORDER TO ASSURE THAT IT WOULD BE AFFILIATED WITH THE ICFTU.

6. THE ORIT AFFILIATES WERE ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO ANY COOPERATION WITH APUSTAL OR WITH THE CLT. AT LEAST AAKJAER HIMSELF RECEIVED THE IMPRESSION THAT THE LATIN AMERICANS WERE TRYING TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF THE NORDIC LABOR CENTERS - "SOMETHING BETWEEN THE CUBAN SYSTEM AND THAT OF THE UNITED STATES".

7. THE ARGENTINIAN CGT WAS STRONGLY PUSHING AFFILIATION OF THE NEW ORGANIZATION WITH THE ICFTU. AAKJAER NOTED THAT THE CGT AND THE VENEZUELAN CTF WERE IN OBVIOUS COMPETITION FOR LEADERSHIP OF THE NEW LATIN AMERICAN ORGANIZATION. THE ARGENTINIANS, HOWEVER, ARE SO ABSORBED WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS THAT THE VENEZUELAN ARE NOW THE FRONT RUNNERS.

8. A REPORT ON THE MISSION WILL BE PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED AT THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF THE NORDIC TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (NTUC) IN HELSINKI APRIL 9-10. (ON HIS WAY TO THE MEETING SECGEN KERSTEN WILL STOP IN CONFIDENTIAL

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COPENHAGEN TO DISCUSS THE MISSION WITH NIELSEN). AAKJAER COMMENTED THAT KERSTEN'S DESIRE TO BRING THE AFL-CIO BACK INTO THE ICFTU JEOPARDIZED THE POSITION THE ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD WOULD TAKE REGARDING THE FUTURE OF ORIT OR ANY NEW ORGANIZATION.

9. AAKJAER CONVEYED THE IMPRESSION THAT THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION WERE STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF AN ICFTU DECLARATION OF ITS ACCEPTANCE OF A NEW LATIN AMERICAN BODY. AAKJAER SAID THAT "AIFLD HAS FAILED" AND THAT THE ICFTU IS FACING THE SAME DILEMMA IN LATIN AMERICA IT FACED IN AFRICA IN 1966-68: SHOULD THE AFL-CIO BE PERMITTED TO PERATE BILATERALLY WITH DOMESTIC LABOR CENTERS UNDER THE ICFTU UMBRELLA, OR SHOULD THE

ICFTU GO ITS OWN WAY WITHOUT THE AFL-CIO?

10. COMMENT: WHILE AAKJAER'S VIEWS MAY SEEM A BIT
IDEALISTIC, THEY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE TEMPERED BY THE
PRAGMATISM OF HIS CHIEF, THOMAS NIELSEN.
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